2: Armellada--ix M-5 (1933-1945) 1946 SS16 Pemon SS16

DEDICATION

114 These psychological-ethnographic commentaries, arising from questions that were asked me about the Pemón Indians of the Gran Sabana and which I could only answer through my assiduous observation of their customs and thoughts during my long stay among them and through the freedom they gave me to penetrate into the sanctuary of their souls; are dedicated paternally to the Pemón Indians themselves.

123 Not only did they answer my questions simply and let themselves be observed without suspicion, since I lived among 212 them "quasi unus ex illis"; there were those who, taught by us, answered by writing in their own language to avoid errors and so that the narration might flow naturally and spontaneously; so that in many cases I am a mere translator.

121 Although grouped with some logical order, these commentaries do not constitute a complete ethnographic study by any means; psychological observations predominate and I frequently bring into the mainstream /of my work/ proverbs of perennial philosophy and the tried statements of eminent thinkers to add flavor to my poor lucubrations.

Let them, thus, go into the hands of those who love the natives as precursors and beginnings of other, vaster studies, which shall be presented to the public view under the initials E. V. I. (Estudios Venezolanos Indígenas /Venezuelan Native Studies/), should we be granted the time and means, for we live at the frontier and in the front line of the missions.

Machiques, May 1, 1946.

3:Simpson N-5 (1939) 1941
SS16 Pemon SS16

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In an earlier paper on Mongolian mammal names[1] I have emphasized the value and importance of compiling vernacular lists of mammal names. Most of what was said there applies with equal force to names used by Carib Indians in South America, the one exception being that no Carib dialect has any native written literature. The Carib languages are still the speech of the country over enormous areas in Venezuela, the Guianas, and Brazil, including regions where it is difficult or impossible to find any local inhabitant who speaks a European language. Their importance to the traveler and collector is thus obvious. It is also noteworthy that many explorers give the Carib names in their publications and that knowledge of these is essential to the technical reader. If the explorer was not a mammalogist or did not see the animal himself, the Carib name is more likely to be correct than is the European or the scientific name given in such publications. As is true also of Mongolian, Carib dialects have provided some of our popular (e.g., manatee) and some of our scientific (e.g., *Alouatta*) names for mammals, although it is true that a very different group of South American languages, Tupí-Guaraní, is more important in these respects.[2]

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The following lists were based, in the first place, on a vocabulary of the Kamarakoto dialect and another of the Taurepán dialect that I recorded in southern Venezuela early in 1939 while attached to the

[1] 1938, Amer. Mus. Novitates, No. 980.
[2] See Simpson (1941), a summary of English vernacular names for South American mammals, written after the present paper but published first.

[p. 1-B]

/0/ territory that is now Venezuelan Guayana was occupied by Indians of Carib
/3/ stock, not greatly unlike those of the coastal region of Caracas or Cumaná.

/77 In northern Venezuela, although Indian blood still visibly survives in many places, Indian culture and tribal organization are now almost completely absorbed into the modern Venezuelan culture, mainly of European origin. Some European influence has penetrated everywhere, even to the most remote tribes who have not yet seen white men, but in general the great mass of Carib tribes south of the Orinoco have resisted this advance, aided by the difficulty of access to their region. Many of them still retain their tribal organization and an almost purely aboriginal culture. Here pre-Columbian American civilization can still be studied, and particularly that of the Caribs, in most respects the most important aboriginal stock in Venezuela.

● /2/ The importance of studying these Indians is very great and its urgency not less so. From the historical point of view, such studies show the indigenous basis of Venezuelan history and culture. From a social point of view an understanding of them may permit an easing of the inevitable process of Europeanization and a lessening of the unintentional brutality that usually accompanies it. Such a study may also prove that the survival of these Indian cultures is a definite economic resource. In any case, these Indians belong to Venezuela, even though they are barely aware of this fact, and knowledge of them by the other, the more civilized Venezuelans, is an obligation and can be a great pleasure. These studies are urgent, because the renascent Venezuela of recent years is advancing impetuously into the most remote fastnesses, and much that is most picturesque and most important in their Indian cultures is disappearing from year to year.

/0/ Most of the Indians of southeastern Venezuela, especially between the
/3/ Caroní on the west and the borders of British Guiana and of Brazil on east and south, belong to a particular branch of Caribs that can best be called Arekuna. The Arekuna division of Caribs, which forms an important surviving nucleus of such Indians, is itself divisible into several quite closely allied by consciously separate tribes, including the Taurepanes near Roroima and the Kamarakotos around the equally great mountain Auyan-tapui. The latter Indians form the subject of this monograph.

/0/ From a broader point of view all the aboriginal cultures of Venezuela
/7/ east and south of the Andes, with all those of British, Dutch and French Guiana and those of extreme northern Brazil, have many traits in common and can be considered as belonging to one culture area or subarea of South America. This is well called the Northeastern or the Guayana (or Guiana) Area, the latter because it centers around Venezuelan Guayana and is typically developed also in the other Guianas. This area in turn has some more general traits in common with others in South America east of the Andes in the north and of the Chaco and Uruguay in the south. This, the so-called Amazon Area, is thus a major

10 particular region is that some tribes habitually live in forests while others ha-
137 bitually live in sabanas, grassy plains amid the forests. This distinction may
182 accompany or induce definite cultural differences even between tribes that are
131 closely allied racially and linguistically. The Kamarakotos, like the Taure-
133 panes, are sabana Indians.[1] They live in sabanas in the midst of surrounding forests, in a series of valley bottoms about 400 to 500 meters in elevation. They always live near but practically never in the forests and strongly prefer relatively flat valley bottoms, seldom penetrating into the mountains even temporarily. Until taken up by white explorers there is no memory or legend of any of them ever climbing Auyán-tepúi or any of the other real mountains
132 around their valleys. In these valleys frost is, of course, quite unknown and the days are always warm enough for clothes to be unnecessary for warmth but are seldom disagreeably hot. The nights are usually chilly and make sleeping indoors preferable. There is little seasonal variation of temperature, but there
[221] are the usual well-defined rainy and dry seasons of the tropics. As in most of Venezuela, the rainy season is "winter," when there is little activity in travel, hunting, or agriculture, and the dry season is the active time.

121 Recently subject, like all the Indians, to growing Venezuelan[2] influence,
178 the Kamarakotos yet retain practically all the pre-Colu[illegible]ture of this
[177] area in readily recognizable and relatively unmodified form. This makes them an almost ideal group for study from this point of view and it also makes their study of much greater value than might appear from the small size of this one tribe. As a type study it is a concrete, unified, but broadly characteristic example of the sort of culture that once prevailed over most of Venezuela and that still prevails over an enormous area of that country. Such "civilized," "Venezuelan," or "European" influence as does appear in this tribe adds to, rather than subtracting from, its importance and interest. This influence lends itself to clear analysis and it also typifies a widespread process and one of the greatest social and economic importance.

114 Studies of this sort have been relatively so rare in Venezuela that an observer can be sure that almost anything he observes is important and worth publishing as long as it is accurately reported and intelligently interpreted. There has, it is true, been a long series of reports on Venezuelan Indians and certainly no depreciation of these studies is intended. Some of the early colonists and missionaries left very valuable accounts, irreplaceable because of their first-hand records of things now vanished. It goes without saying, however, that these were not unprejudiced or skilled observers and that their information was not gathered in a scientific way or integrated with anthropology in general, a science that hardly existed at that time. Other and ethnologically more accurate and sophisticated travelers, like Humboldt and Schomburgk, have since added many more and, on the whole, better data of the same sort. It is necessary to mention only the names of Cordero, Salas, Ernst, Tavera-

1, 2 [see footnotes on p. 305, category 116 – Analyst]

114 Acosta, Requena, and Jahn to know that more recent and still more technical studies of Venezuelan Indians are not lacking. It is not ignoring the work of these and many other enthusiastic and able students, but only stating a fact with which they would agree, to say that in spite of their efforts, Venezuela is still one of the regions where relatively the most remains to be done in the various fields of technical anthropology.

Regarding the Kamarakotos, nothing reliable and important has ever before been published. As I shall show below, literature on them includes only one old reference, doubtful as to meaning and unimportant in content, a few mentions of the name or conjectures, mostly incorrect, by writers or cartographers who knew nothing of the Kamarakotos at first hand, and a single recent brief first-hand mention (by Tate) that is not and was not meant to be of any scientific value. As far as it relates to this tribe, the material in the present monograph is therefore necessarily entirely new.

101 Some allied tribes have been carefully studied and frequent comparisons
114 are made with them, mainly on the basis of this literature. Some of the best
● 121 studies and those by far most important for present comparisons are on the Taurepanes. The great German field ethnographer Koch-Grünberg has published an exhaustive five-volume work mainly devoted to this tribe which, however, he knew more intimately through its most southern, Brazilian, than through its Venezuelan representatives. The Taurepanes are Arekunas,[3] like the Kamarakotos, and resemble the latter in almost every way. No effort is made here to replace or to repeat Koch-Grünberg's work, as far as it applies to the Arekunas generally, but only to show how far it does apply to the whole group, to bring out the features that do distinguish the Kamarakotos within the group, and to supplement the earlier work by devoting special attention to some important subjects, such as textile techniques, that were not treated in detail by Koch-Grünberg despite the length of his work. Unfortunately, Koch-Grünberg's publications are rare and expensive and have appeared only in German. The missionaries of Santa Elena have acquired a knowledge of this tribe second only to that of Koch-Grünberg, if not exceeding the latter. Unfortunately, however, they have as yet published almost nothing new on this subject (see the notes by Baltasar de Matallana cited in the references at end of this monograph).

114 Among more distantly allied tribes, those of British Guiana are most important for comparisons. Here there is a wealth of published material, for few Indians anywhere have been studied more carefully or at greater length. The work of Roth is particularly important here as it is thoroughly reliable, sums up all previous work as well as that of Roth himself, and goes into the most exhaustive detail — a single one of his several publications, called "an introductory study" with humor perhaps unconscious, runs to some 720 quarto pages in fine type with 183 plates and 341 text-figures![4] On the linguistic side,

3, 4 [see footnotes on p. 305, category 116 - Analyst]

114 Williams' fine grammar and vocabulary of the Makuchi language is particularly valuable among studies in British Guiana. Perhaps the work of Farabee should also be mentioned as a source for comparative material, but it has been severely criticized on many points and contains virtually nothing beyond a series of physical measurements that is not obtainable in more detailed and more accurate form from other students.

101 Such, then, is the general racial, linguistic, and cultural picture into
121 which the Kamarakotos fit and such are the main outlines of anthropological studies with which this monograph is to be integrated.

Historical Notes

175 The Kamarakotos appear in written records at a relatively late date.
131 Search of maps purporting to cover the area where they live, from de Bry's map of 1599 down to those of the present time, has not revealed the name of the tribe on any map earlier than 1840, when it appeared on Codazzi's "Carta del Cantón de Upata." Since that date the word Kamarakoto, spelled in several different ways, has appeared on most maps including tribal names in this region. The exact positions given to the name on various maps differ by as much as five hundred kilometers, but it would be profitless to go into this point in detail. The changes in position all appear to be accidental or based on poor evidence and they certainly do not reflect any known migration of the tribe or exact knowledge of its location at any given time.

175 Probably the earliest record of Indians called Kamarakotos, although it has only recently been published, is that of Fray Ramón Bueno, a Franciscan missionary who was stationed with the Orinoco missions from 1785 to 1804 and who left a manuscript description of Guayana written between 1800 and 1804 and published in Caracas in 1933. This curious and valuable work includes the following passage (p. 85 of the printed edition):

"Los Camaracotos, Guayanos y Guaicas, son naciones mezcladas; los primeros y últimos se fugitivan continuamente a los montes y los Guayanos, siendo, los más, criollos, vuelven a los montes a sacarlos. De estas naciones tienen algunos pueblos los RR. PP. Capuchinos Catalanes del Bajo Orinoco y sin embargo de la sujeción con que los tienan, les dan bastante en que pensar: los hacen andar vestidos, a ellos con calzón y camisa y a ellas con fustan terciado; teniendo para el efecto un hato de común cada pueblo, cuyo producido invierten en esto y gastos de entradas a los montes, verificando cada ano una."

175 This information, interesting as it is, is extremely vague and it is by no
101 means certain that the Camaracotos of this account are really the forerunners of the Kamarakotos studied in the present paper. The passage gives no exact

114 had none of the usual executive tasks or camp work to do or to supervise and was able to devote all my waking hours to the study of the Indians. This had the effect of giving me about twice as much work time as would have been available under the usual circumstances of such expeditions and enabled me to do a great deal more than I could ordinarily have hoped to do in the few weeks available.

115 This study was also exceptionally favored by the employment of Antonio
124 Montesdeoca and his assignment to me as interpreter and general informant. He is a full-blooded member of the tribe and thoroughly acquainted with its language and with all its customs. He is also a man of importance in the tribe whose instructions and wishes were always fully carried out by the other Indians. At the same time, he has received some schooling in a Venezuelan town and so was able to convey all the desired information to me in comprehensible Spanish. He was very co-operative, intelligent, and quick-witted. Statements that appeared at all doubtful were not recorded on his authority alone and I took every opportunity to check them in all directions (never finding that he had willfully misled me) but he was my main informant and he spent many hours and days patiently showing and explaining to me everything possible. This was ideal assistance and it, too, made it possible to gather far more and better information than could have been hoped for.

126 A very considerable collection of almost all the portable objects in use in the tribe was also made and this was generously presented by the Ministry of Fomento to the American Museum of Natural History where I have been able to study it at leisure.

101 From Kamarata we were flown to Santa Elena by James Angel, whom I
114 also wish to thank, as well as the Linea Aeropostal which flew us in to Kama-
121 rata and out from Santa Elena. At the latter place we remained for about ten
122 days, the purpose being not a study of the Indians there, the Taurepanes, for their own sake but for comparison. As I have remarked, the Taurepanes are relatively well known scientifically and my brief observations were only for the purpose of permitting a first-hand comparison with the Kamarakotos, giving more reality to the literature for me, and supplying a few needed data still lacking in the literature. Here the hospitality and assistance of Dr. Fernández-Peña were of the greatest value and I wish also to thank the reverend fathers of the Capuchin mission for their friendly interest and whole-hearted co-operation.

122 The materials so gathered have been worked up at the American Museum
128 of Natural History in New York, and acknowledgments are due to that institution for the considerable amount of my time and for many facilities afforded for this work, which is outside the field of the work for which I am there regularly employed.

128 I am indebted to several persons for assistance with various details.
J. Martínez-Mendoza A., of Caracas, and Charles B. Hitchcock, of New York,

128 examined many maps and determined the first appearance of the name of this tribe on a map. Gene Weltfish, of New York, gave advice and references concerning phonetics. E. W. Berry, of Baltimore, gave information on the antiquity of Musa and Dioscorea in America. A. Jahn, of Caracas, gave some suggestions concerning the name and history of the tribe. Of course, none of these authorities is responsible for the use I have made of their information, and in one or two cases my opinions differ from theirs, although mine could not have been formed without the aid of theirs.

114 Finally, it should be mentioned that my wife, Dr. Anne Roe, accompanied me throughout the field work. The observations on women's dresses were made by her and the judgment of the psychological characters of the Indians is in part based on her expert opinion. She has helped also in other less definite respects.

126 The phonetics represent in the main the pronunciation of Antonio Montes-
128 deoca, who speaks Kamarakoto as his native language and without an accent
115 recognizable by other members of the tribe. Most words were also heard from
191 one or many non-Spanish-speaking Indians and the very few anomalies in pronunciation noted or reconciled.

The descriptions of material culture are fairly full and can hardly involve any serious misapprehensions, for I was able to see, handle, draw or photograph, and often to collect practically everything made or used by the Indians.

114 As regards the far more difficult problems of social culture, my observa-
128 tions are necessarily less complete. The best work in this field requires years of residence, fluent grasp of the local dialect, and the complete confidence of the Indians. I had only a few weeks and of course the other requirements could not be met in that time. Before I left, however, and in time to be of material aid, I had enough Indian words at least to be sure that my interpreter was really giving me the gist of what was said and to acquire some information without his aid. There was naturally some reticence on certain points but in almost all cases this was largely broken down before I left. Although many of the more esoteric details could not be obtained in the time available, the general outline and many details of social culture were obtained and these were so carefully checked that I feel confident of their essential accuracy except where I have explicitly stated doubts.

121 In this connection there is one deliberate omission. Everything pertain-
128 ing to health, disease and medicine was assigned for study to the medical doctor who accompanied the party and is therefore omitted from this monograph. In dealing with some essentially non-medical subjects it was necessary to touch briefly on this field, for instance, approximate vital statistics were incidental to census taking and somatic records, and exorcism as a medical procedure had to be mentioned in connection with magic and religion. Everything strictly or primarily medical is, however, purposely left out. There are,

121 128 for instance, no discussions of childbirth, puberty, menstruation, the couvade, herb and other material remedies, or the incidence of specific diseases.

104 [97] It should further be noted that words in italics (aside from obvious taxonomic terms or other manifestly different usages) are Indian words given according to the phonetic system explained here and that they are in the Kamarakoto dialect unless otherwise stated. Indian words that have been Hispanicized or Anglicized are in ordinary type.

101 A frequent source of confusion in the literature is that the word "Carib" is sometimes applied to the whole, diverse mass of Indians who speak languages or dialects of this group, from Central America and the West Indies to Southern Brazil, and sometimes to some particular tribe or smaller group of tribes, especially the Galibis or Kalíñas. Unless I am quoting an author whose usage is [128] doubtful, I use the unmodified word "Carib" only in its broadest sense and do not apply the name specifically to any smaller unit.

439 Indians, but it is my impression that the trade in them is negligible. All of the things listed in this paragraph are usually obtained from the Maquiritares (Maiongones), who are the chief market of the Kamarakotos for articles of Indian consumption and the chief Indian source of imports.

439 A word of advice to future explorers in this general region may not be
435 amiss here. A few groups of Indians, who have had most contact with traders
171 and missionaries, know the value of coins (not bank notes) and will accept them, but most Indians still will not. The most useful articles of trade, because their value to the Indians is greatest in proportion to their bulk and because it is difficult to saturate the market, are small articles, such as fishhooks and needles,
[822] and beads. Beads should be small (within reasonable limits a bead's value is in inverse proportion to its size) and should be mainly or wholly blue and white, other colors being much less prized. Trade cloth should be bright red. Other colors will be accepted, but only if red is not obtainable. The Indian understanding of the value of such articles is very definite and allows the trader a wide margin of profit but does not permit him to set his own unreasonable price. Various flashy novelties may permit enormous profits because the Indians do not know their commercial value — in British Guiana Roth was offered a cow for two finger rings worth sixteen cents, and every traveler has equal or still more impressive stories to tell — but even if the traveler has no conscience in the matter, he runs the risk of finding no market at all for his novelties.[172]

439 Like all other rational beings, the Kamarakotos, and the Guiana Indians
437 in general, try to buy cheaply and sell dearly and with a long tradition of trading they are unlikely to be badly worsted in dealing with articles at all
[123] familiar to them. Acting on instructions and on praiseworthy motives but contrary to my personal opinion as to wise policy, our party did not bargain with them and established an excessively high rate for their labor and their products, but this will probably prove to be temporary and future trade should return to a basis more equitable for both sides.

Magic and Religion

●121 The activities and beliefs that may be classified as religious in the broadest sense are by far the most difficult to observe and to understand in studying a foreign culture. Even students who have spent years with Carib tribes do not claim full comprehension of their religious beliefs, and it is obvious that my observations can only be superficial. They do, however, suffice to show the general type and trend of such beliefs among the Kamarakotos, despite leaving many details and general problems untouched.

Indian religious systems in general (and, sometimes less clearly, all religions) can be approximately classified as, on one hand, theistic, ritualistic,

172 [see footnote on p. 328, category 116 – Analyst]

● 121 collective, and priestly, and, on the other, as animistic, non-ritualistic, individual, and shamanistic. The former are religious in a more limited sense while the latter are predominantly magical as opposed to strictly religious. A given tribe usually shows a mixture of the two general types, sometimes in a single inseparable system with the same individuals acting as priests and shamans, and sometimes in a dual system with the priestly and shamanistic functions differentiated and delegated to different individuals. The Carib religion generally and that of the Kamarakotos specifically are almost purely shamanistic.

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The Piache.

756 Like most other Caribs, the Kamarakotos have only one sort of mediator with the supernatural and he is technically a shaman, a medicineman, not a priest. I shall call this individual the piache, the common Venezuelan Spanish name, derived from the Carib word which in Kamarakoto is piatsan. There are at least three piaches in the central group of Kamarakotos and there are said to be several more among the more outlying Indians loosely affiliated with this tribe. In their daily lives the piaches are hardly distinguishable from anyone else (see Fig. 75).1/A Their supposed supernatural powers give them no particular additional prestige in civil matters and unlike most Indian priests (as distinct from shamans) they are not powerful political forces in the tribe.

The function of the piache is primarily and almost exclusively medical, but the medical system is spiritualistic or religious and not material. As a physician the piache derives his power not from any actual knowledge of diagnosis and physical treatment but from his ability to commune with and in some degree to control, or at least to influence, the supernatural world. To fulfill these functions, the piache requires knowledge of certain physical tricks, not unlike those of spirit mediums elsewhere, and rote memory of various charms and spells, mostly songs, that are not known to the layman.

To learn this trade the apprentice must be accepted as a colleague by a piache already established and by him be initiated into the secrets of the profession. He is required to fast for a long time, two or three months, drinking [785] only water and eating only as much as is absolutely necessary to sustain life, so that he becomes extremely thin. After this preparation, a definite initiation occurs in which apparently only the initiate and his sponsor are involved. The [276] latter gives the former an infusion of green tobacco in water, which is taken through the nostrils. The initiate becomes unconscious and remains so for some [533] hours, normally about half a day. The piache then sings to the initiate, who, still unconscious or in a trance, eventually sits up and starts singing also. When he returns to normal, he is a piache in his own right. The exact details of this and other procedures and the texts of the songs are closely guarded secrets

1/A [For Fig. 75 see p. 228b, category 116 - Analyst]